

Past and Potential Theory for Special Warfare Operational Art: People's War and Contentious Politics

A Monograph

by

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Abstract

Past and Potential Theory for Special Warfare Operational Art: People's War and Contentious Politics, by MAJ Nathanael E. Joslyn, United States Army, 57 pages.

In the context of escalating instability in the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and Africa, special warfare may offer policymakers a valuable strategic option. To succeed, however, special warfare campaigns that apply operational art must be founded upon distinct and sound theories of war and warfare. This monograph argues that from 1952-1965, the US Army Special Forces developed two theories of special warfare, one of guerilla warfare and one of insurgency (revolutionary war). Special Forces' institutional theory of insurgency, an adaptation of Mao Zedong's theory of people's war, remains a primary framework for special warfare operational artists. Furthermore, this monograph contends that a synthetic academic theory of contentious politics provides a more sophisticated theory of insurgency that has potential value for future applications of special warfare operational art.

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Acronyms

ADP	Army Doctrinal Publication
FM	Field Manual
JP	Joint Publication
NSC	National Security Council
RC	Rational choice
RM	Resource mobilization
SFG	Special Forces Group
TC	Training Circular
USASOC	United States Army Special Operations Command

Introduction

For the foreseeable future, the most direct threat to America, at home and abroad, remains terrorism, but a strategy that involves invading every country that harbors terrorist networks is naïve and unsustainable. I believe we must shift our counterterrorism strategy, drawing on the successes and shortcomings of our experience in Iraq and Afghanistan, to more effectively partner with countries where terrorist networks seek a foothold.¹

-President Barack Obama, *Commencement Address at West Point*

Current US policy explicitly favors empowering regional partners as a means to avoid costly troop deployments while actively addressing local and international security threats. In the context of escalating instability in the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and Africa, special warfare may offer policymakers a strategic option that provides more depth than targeted strikes and less fiscal commitment than the execution of large-scale wide area security operations.² To provide such options, special warfare campaigns that evoke the application of operational art must be informed by the conceptual distinctions of the forms of war and warfare. Without conceptual clarity, special warfare campaigns are doomed to failure.

As Samuel Huntington described several decades ago, guerilla warfare is a form of warfare, while insurgency, or revolutionary war, is a type of war.³ Specifically, Huntington defined guerilla warfare as “a form of warfare by which the strategically weak side assumes the tactical offensive in selected forms, times, and places,” while describing revolutionary war as “a

¹ Barack Obama, “Transcript of President Obama’s Commencement Address at West Point,” *New York Times*, May 28, 2014 accessed June 20, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/29/us/politics/transcript-of-president-obamas-commencement-address-at-west-point.html?_r=0.

² Dan Madden, Dick Hoffman, Michael Johnson, Fred T. Krawchuk, John E. Peters, Linda Robinson, and Abby Doll, “Special Warfare: The Missing Middle in U.S. Coercive Options,” (Washington, DC: RAND Corporation, 2014), 1.

³ Samuel Huntington, “Introduction: Guerilla Warfare in Theory and Policy,” in *Modern Guerilla Warfare: Fighting Communist Guerilla Movements 1941-1961*, ed. Franklin Mark Osanka (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1962), xv-xxii. Huntington suggests other typologies of war include total, general, and limited war.

struggle between a nongovernmental group and a government in which the latter attempts to destroy the former by some or all means at its command, and the nongovernmental group attempts by all the means at its command to replace the government in some or all of its territory.”⁴ Huntington’s definitions provide much-needed theoretical distinction on a subject that, at least in the English-speaking world, is fraught with terminology that often confuses methods and outcomes.⁵

This theoretical separation of guerilla warfare and insurgency is a starting point in exploring the question of how an academic theory of contentious politics might inform the application of operational art in special warfare. To investigate this question, the introductory section of this monograph begins with a definition of these concepts and a description of their respective relationships to one another. It concludes by stating a hypothesis that a theory of contentious politics may inform the application of operational art in special warfare with more sophistication than the prevalent framework used to apprehend insurgency.

The second chapter of the monograph details the historical evaluative and literature-assessing techniques employed to examine this proposition.⁶ The third chapter examines the institutional history and doctrine of the US Army Special Forces to identify and evaluate the organization’s prevailing institutional theories of guerrilla warfare and insurgency. The fourth chapter then describes the evolution and content of a scholarly theory of contentious politics, arguing that it offers a rich potential as a theory of insurgency and as a conceptual instrument for

⁴ Huntington, “Introduction: Guerilla Warfare in Theory and Policy,” xv-xxii.

⁵ Guerilla warfare, unconventional warfare, irregular warfare, asymmetric warfare, people’s war, people in arms, resistance movement, revolution, and insurgency are examples of the many terms used to describe both methods and outcomes relevant in special warfare. This monograph uses insurgency and revolutionary war (and their antitheses) interchangeably to refer to Huntington’s outcome-based definition, and prefers guerilla warfare to describe a method or tactic. Other terminology used is introduced relative to its historical and/or doctrinal meaning.

⁶ Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 90, 92.

the special warfare operational artist. The monograph concludes by comparing the current institutional theory of insurgency to that of contentious politics, discussing potential challenges to the operationalization of the theory of contentious politics, and suggesting potential topics for future study and research.

Operational Art, Special Warfare, and Contentious Politics

US joint military doctrine defines operational art as “the application of creative imagination by commanders and staffs—supported by their skill, knowledge, and experience—to design strategies, campaigns, and major operations and organize and employ military forces.”⁷ US Army doctrine defines operational art as “the pursuit of strategic objectives, in whole or in part, through the arrangement of tactical actions in time, space, and purpose.”⁸ In both cases, the core concept of operational art involves a cognitive process of translating abstract strategic thought into specific tactical plans and actions. Operational artists achieve this alchemy by adopting or developing a conceptual framework that describes and anticipates causes and effects within a system of actors, interactions, and environments – a theory of a phenomenon.⁹ They then apply or create a prescriptive theory of action that cognitively links strategic goals (ends) to tactical missions (ways), employing available resources (means) while describing the likelihood of favorable or unfavorable results (risk).¹⁰

⁷ Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, *Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2011), I-13.

⁸ Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-0, *Unified Land Operations* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office 2011), 9.

⁹ G. Stephen Lauer, “The Lifecycle of Doctrine: Anticipation, Adaptation, and Emergence,” (lecture: US Army Command and General Staff College School of Advanced Military Studies, Fort Leavenworth, October 7, 2014).

¹⁰ JP 3-0, II-4.

Special warfare, currently undefined in joint doctrine, is described in US Army doctrine as “the execution of activities that involve a combination of lethal and nonlethal actions taken by a specially trained and educated force that has a deep understanding of cultures and foreign language, proficiency in small-unit tactics, and the ability to build and fight alongside indigenous combat formations in a permissive, uncertain, or hostile environment.”¹¹ ADP 3-05, *Special Operations*, further clarifies that “special warfare is an umbrella term that represents special operations forces conducting combinations of unconventional warfare, foreign internal defense, and/or counterinsurgency through and with indigenous forces or personnel in politically sensitive and/or hostile environments.”¹² Older Army definitions of special warfare were somewhat more succinct, framing it as “all military and paramilitary measures and activities related to unconventional warfare, counterinsurgency, and psychological warfare.”¹³ Thus, special warfare is a set of actions or ways (lethal or nonlethal support to indigenous actors such as resistance movements or governments) that mobilize specific means (special operations forces, indigenous polities, and military/paramilitary formations) to achieve strategic ends or outcomes (the success, failure, or behavior modification of a targeted political actor). Significantly, this broad conception of special warfare is implicitly inclusive of both several forms of warfare (such as guerilla, psychological, and conventional warfare) and several types of war (such as general, limited, and revolutionary war).¹⁴ Forms of warfare correlate to ways, and types to ends and outcomes.

¹¹ Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-05, *Special Operations* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), 9.

¹² Ibid. Current definitions of unconventional warfare and foreign internal defense can also be found on this page. For the doctrinal definition of counterinsurgency see Army Field Manual (FM) 3-24.2, *Tactics in Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2009), 1-2.

¹³ Secretary of the Army Elvis J. Stahr Jr. quoted in Alfred H. Paddock, Jr., *U.S. Army Special Warfare: Its Origins* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 2.

¹⁴ Huntington, “Introduction: Guerilla Warfare in Theory and Policy,” xvi.

Contentious politics examines “interactions in which actors make claims bearing on someone else’s interests, leading to coordinated efforts on behalf of shared interests or programs, in which governments are involved as targets, initiators of claims, or third parties. Contentious politics thus brings together three familiar features of social life: contention, collective action, and politics.”¹⁵ This definition is ambitiously inclusive of nonlethal (strikes and social movements) and lethal (ethnic and religious conflict, civil war, and revolution) forms of non-routine political action.¹⁶ Building on a large body of conflict and social movement scholarship, Charles Tilly, Doug McAdam, and Sidney Tarrow have proposed a synthetic theory that is concerned with the dynamic interaction of opportunity structures, agent behaviors, and cultural frames across the spectrum of political contention. As such, their framework of contentious politics may provide a sophisticated theory of phenomena with potential to inform the cognitive process of operational art when it is concerned with special warfare campaigns.

Defining these terms supports a relational argument and critical assumption of this monograph that the planning and execution of special warfare does not require a unique variant of operational art. The operational artist engaged in planning and conducting special warfare campaigns has a finite set of tactical resources and methods to arrange in time, space, and purpose in pursuit of desired strategic outcomes in a way that mirrors applications of operational art in conventional or traditional campaigning. Special warfare campaigns may require the application of unique heuristics and design methodologies (in lieu of some doctrinal elements of operational

¹⁵ Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow, *Contentious Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 4, 7. Graphic depiction of this conceptual overlap is presented in Figure 1.1.

¹⁶ Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow and Charles Tilly, “Comparative Perspectives on Contentious Politics,” in *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure*, 2nd ed., eds. Mark Irving Lichbach and Alan S. Zuckerman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 277-290.

art or design), but such modifications do not substantively alter the essential cognitive process of operational art.¹⁷

Instead, this monograph suggests that operational art in the context of special warfare demands the application of a distinct theory of phenomenon, or “grammar” of war, at least insofar as it is concerned with insurgency or revolutionary war.¹⁸ Such a theory must differ from traditional conflict frameworks oriented on achieving political objectives through the overthrow of an armed opponent by annihilation and/or attrition.¹⁹ Accordingly, special warfare operational artists must use a theory appropriate to achieving or setting conditions for a political outcome by altering politico-military structures, mobilizing or demobilizing collective actors, and communicating through cultural media with a small but specially trained and culturally-astute military force.²⁰

Hypothesis

This monograph argues that from 1952-1965, US Army Special Forces developed two distinct theories of special warfare, one of guerilla warfare and one of insurgency. It suggests that Special Forces’ institutional theory of insurgency, an adaptation of Mao Zedong’s theory of people’s war, remains a primary institutional framework for applications of special warfare

¹⁷ Brian S. Petit, *Going Big by Getting Small: The Application of Operational Art By Special Operations Forces in Phase Zero* (Denver: Outskirts Press, 2013), 137-165. Colonel Petit proposes unique Phase Zero special operations expressions of the joint elements of operational design.

¹⁸ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Peter Paret and Michael Howard (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 605. The existence of different grammars of war for conventional war and insurgency are proposed by Antulio J. Echevarria II, “American Operational Art, 1917 – 2008,” in *The Evolution of Operational Art: From Napoleon to the Present*, eds. John Andreas Olson and Martin Van Creveld (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 137-161.

¹⁹ Echevarria, “American Operational Art, 1917 – 2008,” 137.

²⁰ Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World* (New York: Vintage Books, 2008), 271.

operational art. Furthermore, this monograph contends that a synthetic academic theory of contentious politics provides a more sophisticated alternative theory of insurgency for future special warfare operational art.

Methodology

This monograph employs the two distinct techniques of historical evaluation and literature assessment. It implements the historical evaluative technique to identify and examine the theoretical frameworks that influenced US Army Special Forces operational art from 1952 to 1965, and to determine their relationship to current institutional theory.²¹ The monograph then turns to a literature assessing technique to summarize and evaluate existing theoretical and empirical literature in the academic field of contentious politics with the intent of demonstrating its potential value to operational artists concerned with special warfare.²²

First, in historically evaluating the adoption and adaptation of special warfare theory, this monograph is limited to the institutional and doctrinal history of the Special Forces from 1952-1965 and their relation to current special warfare doctrine and theory. While covering the entire history of Special Forces would perhaps provide greater detail, such would be overly ambitious for a study of this size. Additionally, since the focus here is on the foundational stage of Special Forces, it is appropriate to examine the period of 1952-1965 and to compare that period to the present.

Several excellent and well-researched histories argue that the preponderance of American military activity has related to guerilla warfare and insurgency. Indeed, studies inclusive of two hundred years of sporadic conflict with Native American peoples, the Mexico City Campaign, the Civil War, and the Philippine Insurrection all support this claim.²³ Few if any of these histories argue, however, that as a derivative of such experience, the US Army ever adopted a cohesive

²¹ Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*, 92.

²² Ibid., 90.

²³ Examples include: Brian McAlister Linn, *The Echo of Battle: The Army's Way of War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007); Andrew J. Birtle, *US Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine, 1860-1941* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1998); and Ian F.W. Becket, *Modern Insurgencies and Counterinsurgencies: Guerillas and their Opponents since 1750* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

theory of insurgency or counterinsurgency. Indeed, as Brian McAlister Linn has observed, the Army tended to discard the lessons of such conflict during interwar periods in favor of reorienting on a larger Western tradition of interstate war.²⁴ This monograph's historical focus serves to highlight one branch of the US Army that appropriated theories of both guerilla warfare and revolutionary war by virtue of its assigned missions.

Second, this monograph seeks to assess a finite body of academic literature concerned with revolutionary conflict and social movement theory produced over the past sixty years. It canvasses the fundamental contributions of early modern conflict theorists outside this period, but emphasizes the structural, rational, and cultural approaches in conflict and social movement scholarship developed from the mid-1960s to the present. The monograph attempts to identify the major arguments of these theoretical approaches and note their explanatory strengths and weaknesses. It then assesses the utility of a theory of contentious politics that synthesizes these approaches as a descriptive and explanatory framework of insurgency for operational artists concerned with special warfare.

In summary, the intent of historically evaluating the evolution of an institutional theory of insurgency and comparing it to an assessment of an academic theory is to discover if the latter may have more value for future applications of operational art in special warfare. The preponderance of research undertaken illustrates institutional and academic development of theory during and in the aftermath of the Cold War. This focus establishes some common historical background and attempts to narrow the research so as to avoid overly broad and categorical judgments.

²⁴ Linn, *The Echo of Battle*, 88-89.

Historical Evaluation of Special Warfare Theory in US Army Special Forces, 1952-1965

This is another type of war, new in its intensity, ancient in its origin – war by guerrillas, subversives, insurgents, assassins, war by ambush instead of by combat; by infiltration, instead of aggression, seeking victory by eroding and exhausting the enemy instead of engaging him. It is a form of warfare uniquely adapted to what has been strangely called “wars of liberation,” to undermine the efforts of new and poor countries to maintain the freedom that they have finally achieved. It preys on economic unrest and ethnic conflicts. It requires in those situations where we must counter it... a whole new kind of strategy, a wholly different kind of force, and therefore a new and wholly different kind of military training.²⁵

- President John F. Kennedy, *Commencement Address at West Point*

Neither the US Army nor Special Forces has an explicit theory of guerilla or counter-guerilla warfare, a fact noted by a School of Advanced Military Studies monograph written 25 years ago.²⁶ The same holds true for a theory of insurgency or counterinsurgency, although there has been no shortage of doctrine written on either topic. If theories of phenomena are necessary for formulations of doctrine and applications of operational art, however, and US Army practitioners of special warfare have historically pursued strategic objectives through the arrangement of tactical actions, it follows that Special Forces operational artists and doctrine writers have, advertently or inadvertently, selected and used theories of guerilla warfare and insurgency in the past. A historical evaluation of Special Forces institutional history and doctrine from 1952 to 1965 suggests that the inception of the organization was connected to a theory of guerilla warfare nested within a framework of general war.²⁷ Furthermore, it indicates that since

²⁵ John F. Kennedy, “Remarks at West Point” (Presidential address; United States Military Academy, New York, June 6, 1962), accessed February 20, 2015, <http://millercenter.org/president/speeches/speech-5766>.

²⁶ Steven T. Jordan, “Framework for Counterguerilla Tactical Doctrine: A Theoretical Approach” (monograph, US Army Command and General Staff College School of Advanced Military Studies, 1990), 7.

²⁷ Huntington, “Introduction: Guerilla Warfare in Theory and History,” xvi. Huntington defines general war as “a struggle between governments in which at least one aims at the complete destruction of the other but does *not* use all the means at its disposal.” He provides a non-nuclear war between world powers as an example.

adopting counterinsurgency as a core mission, Special Forces (and as Echevarria argues, the larger US Army when concerned with counterinsurgency) has institutionally favored a theory of insurgency along Mao Zedong's model of people's war as its grammar for apprehending revolutionary war.²⁸ For Special Forces, this adoption of theory was an outflow of the institution's rapid growth from a small niche force oriented on conducting guerilla warfare in Western Europe into a large and highly visible organization and prospective foil against the spread of revolutionary communism. The Maoist theory of people's war endures as a primary institutional resource for special warfare operational artists to the present day.

The Special Forces institutional theory of guerilla warfare has proven remarkably durable in the context of a general war, as demonstrated by the unconventional warfare campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq. For the special warfare operational artist concerned with insurgency, however, there are two troubling problems with the prevalent institutional model of Maoist people's war. First, it represents a reductionist version of Mao Zedong's theory, derived more from the interpretive work of secondary sources than from Mao's actual writings and campaigns. Second, it rests on assumptions about the roles of popular support and phasing in insurgencies that a growing body of scholarship has called into question.

Inception, the Unconventional Warfare Mission, and a Theory of Guerilla Warfare

When the US Army established the Psychological Warfare Center and the 10th Special Forces Group (SFG) in 1952, its chief concern was neither Mao Zedong's rise to power in China nor the ongoing conflict with Kim Il-sung's Democratic People's Republic of Korea, but the problem of slowing a potential Soviet offensive in Western Europe.²⁹ The Army's focus reflected the tone of NSC-68 that the conquest of Western Europe was already within the military

²⁸ Echevarria, "American Operational Art, 1917-2008," 159.

²⁹ Paddock, *U.S. Army Special Warfare*, 153.

capability of the USSR by 1950.³⁰ In the event of Soviet aggression, the mission of the 10th SFG was to infiltrate behind the Soviet advance to join and develop existing resistance groups in Eastern Europe.³¹ By conducting what became defined as unconventional warfare, or empowering and coordinating the activities of resistance groups and guerilla fighters, the small, autonomous Special Forces detachments were to degrade Soviet operational reach and tempo by diverting formations and resources from conventional military operations, thereby buying the Western Allies time to mobilize and deploy additional forces onto the continent. Over its first ten years of existence, the Special Forces expanded to approximately 2,000 personnel and included the 77th SFG established at Fort Bragg, NC and the 1st SFG, deployed to Okinawa and oriented on similar guerilla and unconventional warfare missions in the Far East.³²

Early Special Forces doctrine provides additional insight into the institutions' early theory of guerilla warfare. Lieutenant Colonel Russell Volckmann, a veteran of WWII guerilla warfare against the Japanese in the Philippines, authored FM 31-20, *Operations Against Guerilla Forces* and FM 31-21, *Organization and Conduct of Guerilla Warfare*, published in 1951.³³ For source material, Volckmann drew on his own experience in the Pacific, but also used information obtained from post-war debriefings of German officers involved in partisan and anti-partisan warfare in Europe.³⁴ Notably, Volckmann and Colonel Aaron Bank were highly instrumental in the birth of Special Forces and were vocal proponents that the institution's purpose be limited to

³⁰ National Security Council Paper Number 68 (NSC-68) reprinted in *Two Centuries of US Foreign Policy: The Documentary Record*, ed. Stephen J. Valone (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995), 130.

³¹ Charles M. Simpson III, *Inside The Green Berets: The First Thirty Years* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1983), 48.

³² Simpson, *Inside the Green Berets*, 49 -50.

³³ Birtle, *US Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine 1942-1976*, 132-151.

³⁴ Ibid.

the conduct of unconventional and guerilla warfare.³⁵ By 1958, the Department of the Army amended and republished FM 31-21 as *Guerilla Warfare and Special Forces Operations*, superseding earlier versions of both FM 31-20 and FM 31-21.³⁶

Special Forces early institutional history and doctrine suggest that the organization's early advocates and creators developed a theory of guerilla warfare nested within a framework of general war. In this construct, unconventional warfare was an instrument of strategic defense in the specific context of an anticipated conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union. Volckmann himself offered a theoretical framework that depicted future war as a global fight between two ideological layers. For Volckmann, Special Forces operations represented exploitation in depth of a friendly "blue" layer that was located within the "red" enemy's sphere of influence.³⁷ Such an approach was a Cold War update to a Western tradition that had some record of considering partisan warfare as being outside the normative boundaries of warfare, but recognized its power and potential to effect the operations of modern, regular armies.³⁸

Indeed, Carl von Clausewitz' examination of "the people in arms," written over a century before Volckmann's FM 31-21, stands out as a pragmatic exposition of this framework. Noting that "the nation that uses it (the people's war) intelligently will, as a rule, gain superiority over those who disdain its use," Clausewitz recommended the conduct of insurrection as a form of defensive war best waged "within the framework of a war conducted by the regular army."³⁹ The

³⁵ Paddock, *US Army Special Warfare*, 120-122.

³⁶ Army Field Manual (FM) 31-21, *Guerilla Warfare and Special Forces Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1958), 1.

³⁷ Paddock, *US Army Special Warfare*, 122.

³⁸ Carl Schmitt, *Theory of the Partisan: Intermediate Commentary on the Concept of the Political*, trans. G.L Ulmen (New York: Telos Press, 2007) 6, 10-11.

³⁹ Clausewitz, *On War*, 479-480. It bears mention that Clausewitz may have developed an appreciation of revolutionary war as a type of war in much the same way that he did limited war. His writings on the subject, not yet translated into English, are discussed by Christopher Daanse,

Prussian's suggestion that "a commander can more easily shape and direct the popular insurrection by supporting the insurgents with small units of the regular army" succinctly foreshadowed the original theoretical locus of Special Forces and guerrilla warfare in the context of general war.⁴⁰

Expansion, the Counterinsurgency Mission, and a Theory of Insurgency

During the 1950s, the spread of Maoist revolutionary war as an engine of communist expansion captured the attention of both American policymakers and the US Army.⁴¹ By the early 1960's, the Kennedy administration, adopting a policy of flexible response, began to demand a counterinsurgency capability from the US military that, combined with other national diplomatic, economic, and informational instruments of power, could stem and perhaps reverse the tide of communist revolution in the Third World.⁴² Despite Kennedy's apparent personal interest in reorienting the entire US Army on counterinsurgency, Army Chief of Staff General George H. Decker advocated instead expanding the role of the Special Forces and increasing its size and capacity for such missions.⁴³

In 1961, Colonel Francis Kelly headed a US Army Command and General Staff Collage review of the Army's responsibilities in the Cold War with regard to the Soviet strategy of "wars

"Clausewitz and Small Wars," in *Clausewitz in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Hew Strachan and Andreas Herberg-Rothe (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 182-195.

⁴⁰ Clausewitz, *On War*, 482.

⁴¹ Dwight D. Eisenhower "The Eisenhower Doctrine" (speech to the US Congress, January 5, 1957), quoted in *Two Centuries of US Foreign Policy*, 143-145. For an Army perspective see S.L.A. Marshall, "A New Strategy for Korea?" *Military Review* 33, no. 5 (August 1953), 35-40.

⁴² Birtle, *US Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine, 1942-1976*, 223-224.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 225-226.

of liberation.” The review concluded that the Special Forces, with existing expertise in guerilla warfare, could play a key role in the context of a US military response.⁴⁴ While the logic of using a force trained for guerilla warfare against communist guerillas was alluring, it glossed over an important distinction. The communists were indeed conducting guerrilla warfare, but they were doing so within the broader context of revolutionary wars.

The institutional implications of adopting counterinsurgency as a Special Forces mission under the aegis of special warfare were enormous. In a short time, a relatively young organization expanded its core mission, grew rapidly and drastically, and received a tidal wave of publicity.⁴⁵ The Special Forces had the attention of the nation and the President, who personally awarded the unit its distinctive Green Beret. The institution rose to the task of exponential growth and reorientation on counterinsurgency by expanding recruitment and tailoring training at the Special Warfare Center in June of 1961.⁴⁶ By 1965, the Special Forces had grown from three to seven groups consisting of 1,500 personnel each, and were conducting missions oriented against the threat of revolutionary communist expansion in Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand as well as in Latin America, the Middle East, and Africa.⁴⁷

Writing in 1962, Brigadier General William P. Yarborough, commander of the Special Warfare Center, embraced the counterinsurgency aspect of special warfare, framing it squarely in the context of the Cold War struggle between communism and the free world.⁴⁸ Additionally, Yarborough advocated that the expanded special warfare mission required a new way of thinking

⁴⁴ Francis John Kelly, *Vietnam Studies: US Army Special Forces 1961-1971* (Washington DC: Center for Military History, 1973), iv, 6-7. Kelly would later serve as the 5th SFG Commander in Vietnam and author the Army’s official history of Special Forces in Vietnam.

⁴⁵ Simpson, *Inside the Green Berets*, 67.

⁴⁶ Paddock, *US Army Special Warfare*, 156-157.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 156. See also Simpson, *Inside the Green Berets*, 70-112.

⁴⁸ William P. Yarborough, “Unconventional Warfare: One Military Viewpoint” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 341, (May 1962), 1-7.

about insurgency. Writing in retrospect, General Yarborough remembered Edgar Snow's *Red Star Over China* and Mao Zedong's example as formative influences at the Special Warfare Center of the early 1960s.⁴⁹ He summarized the cornerstone of the new theoretical approach, "With this kind of history (Mao's success) as a guide, it was clear that the armed forces, which were visible representatives of the government they serve, must be taught to win and maintain support for that government through carefully conceived and executed nonmilitary as well as military actions."⁵⁰ Colonel Charles M. Simpson III further detailed this theoretical shift in his historical account of the Special Forces' first thirty years:

In the communist world...a subtle but important difference in thinking was emerging. It involved guerrilla warfare, but in a context substantially removed from the World War II resistance movements upon which US Special Forces doctrine was based. It more clearly *subordinated military to political action*; paid greater heed to the *interaction in any prolonged conflict of economic; psychological, political, and military factors*; and pounded endlessly on the theme that *support of an indigenous population was the key to success* (emphasis added.)⁵¹

While Mao's approach to insurgency was first accessible through secondary sources such as *Red Star Over China*, a large body of Mao's political and military writings were translated into the five volume *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung* between 1954 and 1956.⁵² By 1958, Mao's theory of revolutionary war had established a de facto prominence in US military circles.⁵³

Special Forces doctrinal developments mirrored the institution's new orientation on communist revolutionary war and the counterinsurgency mission. In this respect, the evolution of Special Forces doctrine was a microcosm of a larger trend within the Army, as documented in

⁴⁹ William P. Yarborough, forward to *Inside The Green Berets: The First Thirty Years* by Charles M. Simpson III (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1983), xi.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Simpson, *Inside the Green Berets*, 53.

⁵² Mao Zedong, *Selected Works, Volumes 1-4* (New York: International Publishers, 1954-1956).

⁵³ Walter Darnell Jacobs, "Mao Tse-Tung as a Guerilla: A Second Look," *Military Review* 37, no. 2 (February 1958), 26.

Andrew J. Birtle's work on US Army counterinsurgency doctrine and Robert A. Doughty's examination of the evolution of US Army tactical doctrine.⁵⁴ The 1961 version of FM 31-21, *Guerilla Warfare and Special Forces Operations*, significantly expanded its treatment of "Resistance and Guerilla Warfare" to emphasize the political, psychological, and economic elements of resistance movements, whereas the 1958 version had been content, in Clausewitzian fashion, to reference national character and geography as the principle variables in guerilla attitudes and organization.⁵⁵ While both the 1958 and 1961 manuals referenced the guerilla's dependence on popular support, they differed in their treatments of external support. In the 1958 manual, external support referenced coordination with conventional forces, while the 1961 manual discussed the sponsorship of an outside power. Furthermore, the 1961 manual introduced the element of time relative to insurgent phasing and organization.⁵⁶ In 1964, the Special Warfare School published Special Text (ST) 31-176, *Counterinsurgency Planning Guide*, which depicted a three-phased concept of guerilla warfare delineating a latent/incipient phase, a guerilla warfare phase, and a war of movement.⁵⁷ By 1965, FM 31-20, *Special Forces Operational Techniques* officially listed unconventional warfare and counterinsurgency as the primary missions of the Special Forces.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Birtle, *US Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine 1942-1976*, 223-278. See also Robert A. Doughty, *Leavenworth Papers: The Evolution of US Army Tactical Doctrine 1946-76* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 2001), 25-29.

⁵⁵ Army Field Manual (FM) 31-21, *Guerilla Warfare and Special Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1961), 5-7; and FM 31-21 (1958), 14-15. See also Clausewitz, *On War*, 480.

⁵⁶ FM 31-21 (1961), 10-11.

⁵⁷ Robert C. Suggs and Brenda M. Welak, "Mao's Three Stages: Fact or Fiction?" *Military Review* 46, no. 11 (November 1966), 93, 96.

⁵⁸ Army Field Manual (FM) 31-20, *Special Forces Operational Techniques* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1965), 52-79.

Institutional history and doctrine of the first counterinsurgency era suggest that Special Forces adopted a theory of insurgency specifically designed to combat the spread of revolutionary communism. The politico-military zeitgeist of the Kennedy Administration and the institutional appropriation of a counterinsurgency mission appear to have influenced this adoption. Mao Zedong's theory of insurgency, or more accurately an American military interpretation thereof, became the core of a theoretical model that was admittedly also informed by Special Forces' older theory of guerilla warfare and a vast quantity of military and scholarly writing and thought on the subject.⁵⁹ The credibility of this finding is enhanced by the impression that within the same period, both the larger US Army and the US Marine Corps (which had its own tradition of concern with "small wars") interpreted Mao's theory in the same light.⁶⁰

This monograph finds strong evidence that from 1961 to 1965, Special Forces perceived a need to supplement the institution's theory of guerilla warfare with a theory of insurgency and that Mao Zedong's model (of insurgency, for he was also arguably a guerilla warfare theorist) was an accessible and crucial contemporary source for such. This monograph suggests that the following tenets, attributed to Mao's theory, formed the core of the Special Forces theory of insurgency by 1965:

- Broad popular support as central to success of either insurgents or governments in insurgency and counterinsurgency⁶¹

⁵⁹ Virgil Ney, "Bibliography on Guerilla Warfare," *Military Affairs* 24, no. 3 (Autumn 1960), 146-149. Colonel Ney's 1960 bibliography lists over one hundred books, public documents, and reports on the topic. Another excellent research bibliography can be found in Osanka, *Modern Guerilla Warfare*, 475-508.

⁶⁰ Birtle, *US Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine 1941-1976*, 24-26. See also T.N. Greene, ed., *The Guerilla and How to Fight Him: Selections from the Marine Corps Gazette* (New York: Fredrick A. Praeger Publishers, 1962). This is an excellent collection of essays from writers such as John Shy, Peter Paret, Walt Rostow, and Samuel Griffith that provides insight into the 1960s US Marine Corps consideration of guerilla warfare and insurgency.

⁶¹ Mao Zedong, "Strive to Win Millions Upon Millions of the Masses to the Anti-Japanese National United Front," in *Selected Works*, Vol. 1 (New York: International Publishers,

- A three-staged model of insurgency composed of a latent/incipient phase, a guerilla warfare phase, and a war of movement phase⁶²
- The subordination of military activity to political purpose⁶³

Notably, this monograph does not make the assertion that these tenets are unique, original, or even truly authentic to Mao's theory. It seems evident that Mao liberally borrowed from (and even cited) Clausewitz and more frequently, Marx and Lenin.⁶⁴ Nor does this monograph claim that these tenets capture the breadth and depth of Mao's accessible work, which also emphasizes the importance of context, continual assessment and learning, and praxis of theory.⁶⁵ This evidence suggests that Mao's revolutionary reputation and writings were central inspirations for the Special Forces and broader US military theoretical frameworks for understanding insurgency.

There were, of course, other important sources of American counterinsurgency doctrine and thought, but on the whole these tended to amplify, rather than challenge, the accepted prominence of Mao's theory. Military students of the day studied the translated writings of other Maoist revolutionaries such as Vo Nguyn Giap and Truong Chinh.⁶⁶ In 1964, the publications of

1954), 273-281. It is worth noting that even with such a title, Mao emphasizes the need to mobilize different class structures in China.

⁶² Mao Zedong, "On the Protracted War," in *Selected Works*, Vol. 2 (New York: International Publishers, 1954), 183-188. Mao used the terminology strategic defensive, strategic stalemate, and strategic counter-offensive to describe three stages of war against the Japanese in 1936. Each stage included various combinations of guerilla, positional, and mobile warfare.

⁶³ Mao Zedong, "On the Rectification of Incorrect Ideas in the Party," in *Selected Works*, Vol. 1, 105-108.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 202.

⁶⁵ John Shy and Thomas W. Collier, "Revolutionary War," in *Makers of Modern Strategy: from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 839-844.

⁶⁶ Birtle, *US Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine 1942-1976*, 261.

Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice and *Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency*, by David Galula and Rodger Trinquier respectively, codified the influential theoretical perspectives of *guerre revolutionnaire*. Both works notably cited Mao's theory as the starting point for formulating a counterrevolutionary approach.⁶⁷ Studies, such as those conducted by the RAND Corporation in 1962 and the Combat Developments Command's Special Warfare and Civil Affairs Group in 1965 further ratified the tenets of popular support, the primacy of the political, and a three-phased concept.⁶⁸

Institutional Guerilla Warfare and Insurgency Theory in the Present

A full exploration of Special Forces institutional history and doctrine from 1965 to today is worthy of its own study, but the continued influence of the theories of guerilla warfare and insurgency that were formulated and adopted from 1952-1965 is discernable through a broad historical connection to the present, and within current US Army and Special Forces doctrine.

If, as Brian McAlister Linn suggests, Vietnam almost destroyed the Army, then it nearly obliterated the Special Forces.⁶⁹ While the institution's performance during the conflict was, by official contemporary accounts, a successful and critical component of American

⁶⁷ David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (1964; repr., Westport, CT: Praeger Security International 2006), xiii. Rodger Trinquier, *Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency*, trans. Daniel Lee (London: Pall Mall Press, 1964), 8.

⁶⁸ Stephen T. Hosmer and Sibylle O. Crane, "Counterinsurgency: A Symposium, April 16-20, 1962," (1963; repr., Washington, DC: RAND Corporation, 2006). This RAND study emphasized popular support and the importance of political and economic factors. For a summary of the CDC Special Warfare and Civil Affairs Group study see Birtle, *US Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine 1942-1976*, 253-256. The study ratified the three-phase model.

⁶⁹ Linn, *The Echo of Battle*, 193. See also Simpson, *Inside the Green Berets*, 217-229.

counterinsurgency efforts, an admixture of negative perception regarding the war's conclusion and the moral cost of protracted counterinsurgency largely eclipsed this contribution.⁷⁰

As a result of the outcome in Vietnam and changes to US policy, the larger institution of the US Army all but abandoned the counterinsurgency mission and relegated a substantially reduced Special Forces to the fringes of operational relevance. The leadership of Generals Abrams, DePuy, and Starry and the doctrines of Active Defense and AirLand Battle gradually ushered in a renaissance for the Army. These new doctrines, however, gave little consideration to guerilla warfare or insurgency, a fact that alarmed future Assistant Secretary of Defense for Low Intensity Conflict Michael Sheehan while a Major at CGSC in 1992.⁷¹ Quietly however, in the 1980s and 1990s, the Special Forces experienced their own revival as foreign internal defense missions achieved success in assisting friendly governments in combating insurgencies, particularly in El Salvador.⁷² While Desert Storm was in many ways the apogee of the Army's recovery from Vietnam, the visible manifestation of Special Forces' continued relevance would come a decade later, in the mountains of Afghanistan and hills of Kurdistan.

In the wake of 9/11, both guerilla warfare and insurgency returned to center stage for Special Forces, and eventually the entire Army. The unconventional warfare campaigns in Afghanistan and northern Iraq, creative evocations of Special Forces' original mission, demonstrated that advising and assisting indigenous guerilla forces could indeed play a central role in general wars by means of synchronization with conventional military firepower and

⁷⁰ Kelly, *Vietnam Studies: US Army Special Forces 1961-1971*, 160-175. See also Andrew Mack, "Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars: The Politics of Asymmetric Conflict," *World Politics* 27, no. 2 (January 1975), 175-200.

⁷¹ Michael A. Sheehan, "Army Doctrine and Irregular Warfare" (thesis, US Army Command and General Staff College, 1992), 36-40.

⁷² Linda Robinson, *Masters of Chaos: The Secret History of the Special Forces* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 35-56.

maneuver.⁷³ Once protracted insurgencies developed in Iraq and Afghanistan, both Special Forces and the Army reached to the past and Mao for a theoretical model of people's war to reprise and improve their Vietnam-era roles in combating insurgency.⁷⁴ Today, the legacy of the second counterinsurgency era remains uncertain, but current events in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Africa suggest that the phenomena of guerilla warfare and revolutionary war are likely to remain relevant to practitioners of special warfare for the foreseeable future.

Current special warfare (unconventional warfare, foreign internal defense, and counterinsurgency) doctrine remains founded in theories of guerilla warfare and insurgency that are traceable to the origin and expansion of Special Forces from 1952-1965. Both the 2008 Field Manual 3-05.130, *Special Operations Forces Unconventional Warfare*, and the 2010 Training Circular (TC) 18-01, *Special Forces Unconventional Warfare*, have a discernable lineage to Volckmann's original 1951 *Organization and Conduct of Guerilla Warfare*. Present-day doctrine preserves Volckmann's phasing of guerilla warfare as inclusive of (psychological) preparation, initial contact, infiltration, organization, build-up, and (exploitation) employment. Contemporary doctrine only improves on Volckmann's model by adding a final phase of transition.⁷⁵ Like the 1951 FM, current doctrine discusses the training and organization of guerilla forces and examines the role of logistics, communications, and medical support in denied environments. Notably, current Special Forces unconventional warfare doctrine observes a rare distinction (in US Army

⁷³ Robinson, *Masters of Chaos*, 153-190; 296-341.

⁷⁴ Jeffrey C. Isaac, Stephen Biddle, Stathis N. Kalyvas, Wendy Brown and Douglas A. Ollivant, "The New U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual as Political Science and Political Praxis" *Perspectives on Politics* 6, no. 2, (June 2008), 351-353. Kalyvas identifies Mao as a primary source of the people's war model.

⁷⁵ Army Field Manual (FM) 31-21, *Organization and Conduct of Guerilla Warfare* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1951), 40. See also Army Field Manual (FM) 3-05.130, *Special Operations Forces Unconventional Warfare* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2008), 4-5; and Army Training Circular (TC) 18-01, *Special Forces Unconventional Warfare* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2010), 1-8.

doctrine) between form of war and warfare and clearly establishes definitions of guerilla warfare and insurgency.⁷⁶

When addressing insurgency and counterinsurgency, current US Army and Special Forces doctrines reflect and codify the Maoist people's war approach adopted from 1961-1965. "At its heart, counterinsurgency is a struggle for the support of a population," argues the introduction of the 2009 FM 3-24.2, *Tactics in Counterinsurgency*.⁷⁷ Indeed, while the 2009 FM filled the Army's doctrinal void on the topic of insurgency (its predecessor, FM 90-8, was entitled *Counter guerrilla Operations*), it did so by turning to the first counterinsurgency-era model of people's war.⁷⁸ Special Forces doctrine did not need to recover such knowledge from the past – it had never left it behind.⁷⁹ Underneath changes in terminology, the 1960s Special Forces model of counterinsurgency had survived as "internal defense and development" and later as "foreign internal defense," albeit heavily influenced by post-Vietnam caveats regarding the political stability of host nations and prevention of large-scale US military involvement.⁸⁰ Mao's strategy of protracted war and the three-phased model of insurgency remain salient topics in most current doctrinal publications that addresses insurgency, inclusive of FM 3-24.2, FM 3-05.130, TC 18-01,

⁷⁶ TC 18-01, 1-2.

⁷⁷ FM 3-24.2, ix.

⁷⁸ Isaac et al., "The New U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual as Political Science and Political Praxis," 351-353.

⁷⁹ Army Field Manual (FM) 31-21, *Special Forces Operations: US Army Doctrine* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1974), 10-1 – 10-3. See also Army Field Manual (FM) 31-20-3, *Foreign Internal Defense Techniques, Tactics, and Procedures for Special Forces* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1994), 1-11 -1-12. The numbering of the FMs additionally illustrates their continuity with the older manuals.

⁸⁰ For additional background on US Army counterinsurgency doctrine in the aftermath of Vietnam, see Birtle, *US Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine 1942-1976*, 448-455; 477-495.

and the 2007 successor to FM 31-20-3, FM 3-05.202, *Special Forces Foreign Internal Defense Operations*.⁸¹

An evaluation of the Special Forces' institutional evolution and doctrine between 1952-1965 and of the present suggests that the organization's theory of guerilla warfare remains broadly consistent with the framework introduced by Volckmann in the 1950s. Successful unconventional warfare campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq have recently illustrated the enduring value of this theory. This monograph also finds strong evidence that the Special Forces, and indeed the US Army writ large, continue to apprehend insurgency through the Maoist theory of people's war that they adopted during the first counterinsurgency era. This institutional theory of insurgency, however, may have limited utility for special warfare operational art.

Critique of Institutional Insurgency Theory

The institutionally held theory of Maoist people's war poses two significant problems for modern special warfare operational artists. First, the theory simplifies Mao Zedong's framework for understanding insurgency, and in doing so, excludes some of Mao's most valuable insights. Second, the institutional theory uncritically accepts the validity of three-phased and population-centric insurgency, tenets that a growing body of scholarship has reasonably challenged.

First, the institutional model of insurgency profoundly simplifies Mao's framework and ignores some of his theory's most enduring value in an attempt to generalize some of his principles of Chinese revolutionary war to other insurgencies. Historians John Shy and Thomas Collier point out that Mao's writing, like that of Jomini and Clausewitz, is often divorced from its historical context and misunderstood.⁸² In this sense, a Mao scholar might be justified in

⁸¹ FM 3-24.2, 2-15-2-18. See also Army Field Manual (FM) 3-05.202, *Special Forces Foreign Internal Defense Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2007), A1-A7; TC 18-01, 2-6-2-7.

⁸² Shy and Collier, "Revolutionary War," 839-840.

objecting to the labeling of American insurgency theory as authentically Maoist. A thorough reading of Mao's *Selected Works* certainly supports the impression that the Chairman, like Christopher Daanse suggests of Clausewitz, seems to stand for a particular image of war that has emerged through numerous misinterpretations and elevations of his platitudes over the full body of his theory.⁸³ Some of this confusion may be attributable to the excessive attention given to Mao's "little red book" on people's war published during the ascendancy of Lin Biao in 1967, the purpose of which was more as political propaganda than the exposition of theory.⁸⁴ Critics of Mao certainly suggest that he was more master propagandist than seminal revolutionary theorist and argue that his victory owed more to the WWII conflict between the United States and Japan than to his military genius.⁸⁵ It is worth noting, however, that these attributes are not necessarily exclusive, and that the *Selected Works* indeed represent a patchwork of vehement political rhetoric and practical military strategy.⁸⁶ The "myth of Maoist people's war," which ascribes an aura of invincibility to guerilla revolutionaries, may owe no small debt to such dualistic efforts.⁸⁷ Shy and Collier suggest that Mao's theoretical contributions regarding the importance of strategic assessment, situational understanding, systematic learning, and praxis of theory go largely ignored in the West in favor of attempts to generalize his model of Chinese revolutionary war to other insurgencies.⁸⁸ Indeed, at least one writer identified and challenged this proclivity within

⁸³ Daanse, "Clausewitz and Small Wars," 182.

⁸⁴ Shy and Collier, "Revolutionary War," 841.

⁸⁵ Anthony James Joes, *Resisting Rebellion: The History and Politics of Counterinsurgency* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 2004), 206-207.

⁸⁶ For a firsthand account of Mao's meticulous attention to communicating his political narrative see Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China* (1938; repr., New York: Grove Press, 1973), 106.

⁸⁷ Joes, *Resisting Rebellion*, 191-192.

⁸⁸ Shy and Collier, "Revolutionary War," 842-844, 855-858.

US military circles as early as 1958.⁸⁹ While modern American counterinsurgency doctrine has come under similar criticism for this tendency, it seems plausible that Mao himself would have judged such paucity of contextual appreciation and strategic analysis in error.⁹⁰

Second, the institutional theory of people's war rather uncritically accepts the precepts of three-phased and population-centric insurgency, tenets that military and academic perspectives have increasingly called into question. The institutional concept of a three-phased insurgency consisting of semi-fluid latent/incipient, guerilla warfare, and war of movement manifestations is a notable culprit for a general US military tendency to conflate guerilla warfare with insurgency. Birtle argues that the institutional adoption of a three-phased concept led Army doctrine to focus on the scale and intensity of insurgency, rather than the methods of warfare employed.⁹¹ As such, it is a prime example of Mao's theory removed from its original context. The American phases, traceable to special warfare doctrine in 1964, are in fact based on Mao's formulation of a way forward in protracted war against the Imperial Japanese Army in 1936.⁹² Mao's stages, consisting of a period of strategic defensive, strategic stalemate, and strategic counter-offensive, each require combinations of mobile, positional, and guerilla warfare. Mao's narrative is not tantamount to an exposition of the primacy of guerrilla warfare in insurgency, but rather subordinates guerilla activity to mobile and positional warfare in both the first and final stages.⁹³ A 1966 criticism of the Special Warfare School three-phased approach by Robert C. Suggs and Brenda M. Welak argues that Mao's stages represent the phasing of a total national conflict rather

⁸⁹ Jacobs, "Mao Tse-Tung as a Guerilla: A Second Look," 30.

⁹⁰ Isaac et al., "The New U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual as Political Science and Political Praxis," 351-353.

⁹¹ Birtle, *US Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine 1942-1976*, 255.

⁹² Mao Zedong, "On the Protracted War," in *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, 183-184.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 184, 188.

than guerilla warfare, and that they were principally intended as a slogan to rally ideological unity in Communist China.⁹⁴ Suggs and Welak contend that the parsimony of the three-phased concept is undeniable, but obscures its lack of scientific basis and greatly oversimplifies the phenomenon of insurgency.⁹⁵ The reduction of insurgency to three phases and a corresponding conflation of guerilla methods with revolutionary outcomes are problematic when generalized to other revolutions. Modern insurgencies in Mali and Iraq, for instance, have achieved success without manifesting a protracted guerilla phase. Modern resistance movements in the Middle East and North Africa have overthrown regimes without engaging in any organized violent conflict.

Similarly, the institutionally held tenant of insurgency's population-centric nature poses serious difficulty for modern special warfare operational artists who must employ limited personnel resources to achieve desired strategic outcomes. While "winning hearts and minds" is an adage that at least colloquially has deep roots in the American tradition of counterinsurgency, an approach that treats insurgencies as popularity contests between governments and rebels provides little direction for the application of a numerically constrained force, no matter how well-trained and culturally-astute.

Criticism of population-centric insurgency theory is not new. In 1965, Charles Wolf, Jr. published a short study for RAND that pointed out that the pervasively accepted tenant of popular support in the counterinsurgency theory of the day was empirically untested.⁹⁶ Wolf proposed that instead, insurgencies should be considered as operating systems that required a number of inputs and manifested violent outputs.⁹⁷ Military action, Wolf suggested, was best directed at

⁹⁴ Suggs and Welak, "Mao's Three Stages: Fact or Fiction?" 94.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 96.

⁹⁶ Charles Wolf, Jr., "Insurgency and Counterinsurgency: New Myths and Old Realities," (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1965), 3. Wolf credits Mao's work as a principle inspiration for the "new mythology" of popular support.

⁹⁷ Wolf, "Insurgency and Counterinsurgency: New Myths and Old Realities," 10.

curtailing the outputs of insurgency, while action against inputs should be carefully evaluated from a vantage point of the entire system.⁹⁸ Wolf teamed with Nathan Leites in 1970 to expand this argument in another RAND study. Leites and Wolf contended that conflict affected popular allegiances at least as much as such allegiances affected conflict and pointed to the coercion of populations as a key variable unaccounted for in the population-centric model.⁹⁹ Furthermore, they suggested that small, tailored, and capable government forces with capabilities similar to those of insurgents could be effective in the revolutionary context.¹⁰⁰

More recently, revolutionary conflict theory has amplified the ideas of Leites and Wolf, and is further discussed in the subsequent section of this monograph. From a historical perspective, Douglas Porch's *Counterinsurgency: Exposing the Myths of the New Way of War* represents a comprehensive argument against modern counterinsurgency efforts founded in a theory of people's war. Porch contends that the population-centric model is not only overly tactical and inefficient, but potentially "heartless and inhumane," as it may justify the targeting of populations through force and coercion.¹⁰¹ Contemporary scholarship from the School of Advanced Military Studies, too, has criticized population-centric counterinsurgency through a collection of monographs that illustrate its explanatory shortcomings in case studies of Mexico, Afghanistan, and Algeria.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ Ibid., 11-12, 14.

⁹⁹ Nathan Leites and Charles Wolf, Jr., "Rebellion and Authority: An Analytic Essay on Insurgent Conflicts" (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, Advanced Research Projects Agency, 1970) 99, 156.

¹⁰⁰ Leites and Wolf, "Rebellion and Authority," 154.

¹⁰¹ Douglas Porch, *Counterinsurgency: Exposing the Myths of the New Way of War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 527-528.

¹⁰² Dan G. Cox and Thomas Bruscino, eds., *Population-Centric Counterinsurgency: A False Idol? Three Monographs from the School of Advanced Military Studies* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 2011).

This monograph does not suggest that popular support is unimportant in the context of insurgency, particularly in revolutionary situations that involve manifestations of guerilla warfare. It does, however, submit that the simplistic “hearts and minds theory,” which lies at the core of the institutional theory of insurgency, ignores the complex and dynamic nature of social behavior in a way that is particularly unhelpful (if not misleading) for the planning or practice of special warfare as it relates to revolutionary war.¹⁰³

In summary, this monograph argues that special warfare requires both theories of guerilla warfare and insurgency, and that the origins of modern institutional theory are discernable in Special Forces history and doctrine between 1952-1965. Volckmann’s theory of guerilla warfare and Mao’s theory of people’s war (or at least its American interpretation) remain the salient frameworks available to modern special warfare operational artists, at least via institutional education and doctrine. Volckmann’s guerilla warfare theory has proven remarkably durable in the practice of unconventional warfare waged in the context of general war. The institutional people’s war model, however, lacks the contextual sophistication of Mao’s original theory, conflates guerilla warfare with revolutionary war, and does not provide a logic for the erudite application of force in insurgency or counterinsurgency. A search for a theory of insurgency that avoids these pitfalls should consider the social science perspective of contentious politics.

¹⁰³ Leites and Wolf, “Rebellion and Authority,” 150.

Literature Assessment of Contentious Politics

Exploring an academic theory as a potential framework for special warfare operational art requires a broad assessment of its content and development. This literature assessment will first canvass the pre-1960s theorists of social change and revolution. Second, it will illustrate the development of the structural, agent/mobilization, and cultural schools of thought in revolutionary conflict and social movement theory from 1960 to the present. Third, it will describe the synthetic theoretical approach of contentious politics as proposed by Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly.¹⁰⁴ The work of these scholars is selected because they cogently represent a growing consensus among conflict and social movement theorists that seek to synthesize the major schools of thought in the field. It concludes that a synthetic theory of contentious politics may be extremely useful as a theory of insurgency to operational artists in the context of modern special warfare.

Early Modern Conflict Theory

Early modern theories of contentious politics connect to the great social upheavals that occurred from the late 18th to early 20th centuries and, though largely descriptive rather than explanatory, continue to inform present day thought. Theories of popular revolt and revolution dating back to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Alexis de Tocqueville, Carl von Clausewitz, and Karl Marx were bound up in the logic or explanation of revolutionary movements in America, France, and mainland Europe from 1776 – 1848. The events surrounding the Paris Commune in 1870 and the Russian Revolution of 1917-1922 provoked a renewed interest in revolutions and social movements evinced in the work of Gustave Le Bon and Crane Brinton.

¹⁰⁴ Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 5.

“Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains,” alleged Jean-Jacques Rousseau in his opening to *The Social Contract*.¹⁰⁵ Rousseau’s two enduring contributions to contentious politics were his identification of the relationship between socio-economic structures (which he broadly termed “civilization”) and political oppression and his justification of collective action to alter that structure. Although Rousseau’s imperative to revolt against despotism and form a new moral community was heeded with brutality by French revolutionaries, Rousseau himself did not believe all revolt had to occur by force, only that it had to succeed in replacing a corrupt system with one that answered to the general will of the people.¹⁰⁶

Alexis de Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America* represents an early attempt to conduct sociological analysis and to formulate an explanatory theory of revolutionary outcomes. De Tocqueville’s research in early 19th century America and France led him to conclude that both revolutions were by-products of improvements in social and economic conditions in the former colonies that followed a prolonged period of oppression.

Carl von Clausewitz’ historical proximity to the French Revolution and Spanish War of Independence led him to the conclusion that popular uprisings demanded classification as war. This determination inspired Clausewitz to treat national mobilization in the form of popular insurrection as a functional method for defense of the homeland in the instance of foreign invasion, particularly when paired with regular army operations.¹⁰⁷ Clausewitz’ enduring contribution to modern appreciations of revolt and revolution was his recognition that such conflict was not a thing apart from war, but rather a dual function of war’s political nature and the

¹⁰⁵ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses*, trans. G.D.H. Cole (1762; repr., New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1950), 3.

¹⁰⁶ Donald G. Tannenbaum and David Schultz, *Inventors of Ideas: An Introduction to Western Political Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (Belmont, CA: Thomson-Wadsworth, 2004), 198.

¹⁰⁷ Clausewitz, *On War*, 479-483.

elimination of conventional barriers by the elemental violence unleashed by the social upheavals of his age.¹⁰⁸

No early modern thinker had a greater impact on modern revolutionary conflict theory than Karl Marx. Indeed, Marx is widely considered the progenitor of the structuralist approach to present-day revolutionary and social movement theory and many modern theorists remain anchored in a scholarly Marxist tradition.¹⁰⁹ Marx argued that objective contradictions between the divisions of labor and capital (the political economy) determined the superstructure of politics, law, religion, and family and manufactured inevitable class conflict that might become violent, but would eventually result in the establishment of a classless society.¹¹⁰ Marx's enduring influence is further evidenced by the fact that an impressive number of modern revolutionary practitioners – inclusive of Lenin, Mao, Ho, Castro, and Guevara – appropriated his tenets and adapted them to achieve revolutionary outcomes, often with some success.

Gustave Le Bon contributed an early psychological perspective to the study of revolutions and social movements. In *The Psychology of Revolutions*, Le Bon typified revolutions as scientific, political, and religious and examined the case of the French Revolution in particular.¹¹¹ For Le Bon, leadership played a key role in mobilizing the masses, but the unleashing of emotions under revolutionary conditions helped explain its characteristic violence.¹¹² Le Bon's most significant contribution was his suggestion that crowd psychology

¹⁰⁸ Clausewitz, *On War*, 479, 605.

¹⁰⁹ Most literature reviews in revolutionary conflict and social movement theory continue to emphasize Marx's contribution in this regard. The theories of Barrington Moore, Jr., Eric Wolf, and Theda Skocpol all draw from the scholarly Marxist tradition.

¹¹⁰ Tannenbaum and Schultz, *Inventors of Ideas*, 264-270.

¹¹¹ Gustave Le Bon, *The Psychology of Revolutions* (Project Gutenberg, 1996), bk. 1, chapt. 1-2, accessed February 27, 2014, <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/448>.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, bk. 1, chapt. 3.

differed fundamentally from individual psychology in that unconscious elements seemed to predominate and conform to a collective logic.¹¹³

Crane Brinton's treatment of revolution is an excellent bridge to modern revolutionary conflict theory because of the duration of his study. Brinton wrote the first edition of *The Anatomy of Revolution* in 1938, and revised and expanded his work in 1965, in the wake of the post-World War revolutionary movements. Brinton contributed an important notion to the theory of contentious politics by arguing that the scientific method could be used to examine historical case studies.¹¹⁴ His examination of the English, American, French, and Russian Revolutions led him to conclude that these revolutions had common stages. For Brinton, the antecedent of revolution was financial crisis that usually revealed government inefficiency.¹¹⁵ Discontent with inefficiency frustrated a particular group's desire for advancement and a desertion of intellectuals from the government's camp to that of the contentious group further politicized such dissatisfaction.¹¹⁶ Once conflict was sufficient to allow the mobilization of a critical level of support, revolution occurred. The period immediately following a revolution was characterized by the rule of moderates, who were often displaced by a group of extremists that exercised reigns of "terror and virtue."¹¹⁷ Eventually, a "Thermidor" period would ensue that would signify a return to societal equilibrium.¹¹⁸

¹¹³ Le Bon, *The Psychology of Revolutions*, bk. 2, chapt. 4.

¹¹⁴ Crane Brinton, *The Anatomy of Revolution*, revised and expanded ed. (New York: Random House, 1965), 13-20.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 36-39.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 39-49.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 121-204.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 205-236. Brinton named the period of recovery from radical rule after the period following the fall of Robespierre in the French Revolution.

In summary, the early modern theorists of social upheaval and revolution made several critical contributions to the modern theory of contentious politics. Rousseau and Marx both informed a structural approach to conflict, while allowing agency a role in engineering collective action. De Tocqueville introduced the American Revolution as a case open to comparative analysis and formulated an early theory of revolutionary explanation. Clausewitz subsumed revolution into a general theory of war, while Le Bon suggested the role of psychological and cognitive factors. Finally, Brinton introduced scientific historical analysis and a staged model of revolutions spanning the gap between what Jack Goldstone terms the “first generation theorists” and the modern theories of revolutionary conflict and social movements.¹¹⁹

Modern Revolutionary Conflict Theory and Social Movement Theory

From 1960 to the turn of the century, theories of contentious politics have, with few exceptions, been divided between scholars who alternately emphasize the explanatory primacy of structure, agency, and culture. The diffusion of social unrest that swept the world in the wake of World War II and reached its zenith in the turbulent 1960s led to the explosive development of cohesive sociological studies in revolutionary conflict theory.¹²⁰ As unrest became manifest in the global North in the form of student protests, labor strikes, and civil rights, feminist, and LGBT movements, a distinguishable body of literature in social movement theory also emerged.

Structural Theory

The structural schools of revolutionary conflict and social movements hold that the broad social, economic, and political constraints under which actors act are the key determinants of

¹¹⁹ Jack Goldstone, “Theories of Revolution: The Third Generation,” *World Politics* 32, no. 3 (April 1980), 426-7.

¹²⁰ Ted Robert Gurr, ed., *Handbook of Political Conflict: Theory and Research* (New York: Free Press, 1980), 16.

conflict and outcomes.¹²¹ The scholarly Marxist perspectives of revolutionary conflict offered by Barrington Moore and Eric Wolf and the political science perspective of Samuel Huntington are examples of early structuralist theories of contentious politics. The contributions of Theda Skocpol, Jack Goldstone, and Misagh Parsa are examples of more recent structural theory. Structural approaches favor the use of comparative historical case studies and seek to distill general explanation from a small group of similar events. Many structural theorists have therefore sought to narrow their analyses by typifying contention as peasant revolution, social revolution, or great revolution. Criticisms of the structural school generally point out that these theories do not account for the strategic interaction of individual or collective agents. Furthermore, while they explain how revolutionary situations develop, they fail to account for revolutionary outcomes except in retrospect.¹²²

In *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (1966), Barrington Moore Jr. argued that the forces of modernization interacted with the structure of the political economy in agrarian states to co-produce three distinct revolutionary typologies inclusive of bourgeoisie revolution, revolution from above, and peasant revolution.¹²³ These events produced three corresponding revolutionary outcomes: capitalist democracy (as in Britain, the US, and France), fascism (Germany and Japan), and communist dictatorship (Russia and China). Moore proposed that the key structural variables that determined these paths and outcomes within a country were the strength of the bourgeoisie

¹²¹ Chris Brown and Kristen Ainley, *Understanding International Relations*, 4th edition (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 65.

¹²² Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1978), 193-194.

¹²³ Barrington Moore, Jr., *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), xi-xvi.

impulse, the predominant mode of commercial agriculture (market or labor repressive), and the revolutionary potential of the peasantry.¹²⁴

In *Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century* (1969), Eric Wolf applied a scholarly Marxist anthropological perspective to argue that peasant rebellions exemplified structural violence resulting from the proliferation of North Atlantic capitalism into indigenous socio-cultural systems.¹²⁵ This intrusion of an alien political economy disrupted pre-existing cultural values and created ecological crisis. Such disruption, when coupled with rapid population growth, destroyed indigenous power structures and gave way to a system of multipolar powerbrokers under a weak central executive.¹²⁶ Wolf reasoned that instability resulted from this interaction, and that such instability was the principal cause of revolutionary situations.

From a non-Marxist perspective, Samuel Huntington echoed Moore's emphasis on the role of modernization but examined its interaction with state structure rather than class struggle. In *Political Order and Changing Societies*, he argued that revolution resulted from a mismatch between rapid social and economic change and more slowly developing political institutions.¹²⁷ Huntington agreed that economic class influenced revolutionary trajectories, but primarily in terms of the agent behavior of a labor or middle class that co-opted the peasantry to overthrow the defunct and inefficient institutions and establish a new political order.¹²⁸

Theda Skocpol sought to improve the Marxist structural argument deployed by Barrington Moore by arguing for the inclusion of world historical and international structure in

¹²⁴ Theda Skocpol, *Social Revolutions in the Modern World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 26-32.

¹²⁵ Eric R. Wolf, *Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 276-282.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 284.

¹²⁷ Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968), 265.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 277-308.

the analysis of social revolutions in *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China* (1979).¹²⁹ Skocpol's argument thus synthesized the model proposed by Moore with Wolf's world system account of political economy and an understanding of international competition.¹³⁰ Skocpol's approach particularly emphasized the primacy of structure above agent behavior or mobilization, and remains the exemplar of a purely structuralist theory of revolution.¹³¹

Jack Goldstone's *Revolution and Rebellion in the Early Modern World* (1991) sought to test the predominantly Marxist structural paradigm by examining revolutionary outcomes apart from the modern contexts of capitalist political economy and modernization. Goldstone concluded that while international and world historical structures indeed influenced the creation of revolutionary situations, ecological and international political factors were more instrumental than the diffusion of global capitalism. Goldstone suggested that the convergence of three factors – crises of state resources, elite disunity and alienation from the state, and the mass mobilization potential of the population were the structural antecedents of revolutionary situations.¹³² Furthermore, Goldstone provided a framework for apprehending revolutionary situations in the Third World that accounted for the external influence of superpowers.¹³³ More recently,

¹²⁹ Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979) 19.

¹³⁰ Skocpol, *Social Revolutions in the Modern World*, 229-230.

¹³¹ David Romano, *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement: Opportunity, Mobilization, and Identity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 9-10.

¹³² Farrokh Moshiri, "Revolutionary Conflict Theory in an Evolutionary Perspective," in *Revolutions of the Late Twentieth Century*, eds. Jack A. Goldstone, Ted Robert Gurr, and Farrokh Moshiri (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), 29-35.

¹³³ Jack A. Goldstone, "Revolutions and Superpowers" in *Revolutions and Superpowers*, ed. J.R. Adelman (New York: Praeger, 1980), 38-48.

Goldstone has contributed to the synthetic study of contentious politics and informed a structural approach that describes the effects of weak and resilient autocracies.¹³⁴

Misagh Parsa's *States, Ideologies, and Social Revolutions* (2000) argued that an incorporation of an appreciation of ideology strengthened a structural approach and synthetically incorporated political process and resource mobilization perspectives of collective action.¹³⁵ Parsa's model of Third World social revolutions thus synthesized resource mobilization (described in the following section) with structuralism by allowing that structural variables explain revolutionary situations, but an explanation of revolutionary outcomes had to account for the strategic interaction of agents.¹³⁶ Parsa argued that Third World social revolutions occur as a result of state centralization of political authority and intrusion into economic systems when such action disenfranchises the capitalist middle class. Deprived of former or relative political and/or economic standing, this economic class appeared more likely to mobilize in support of alternative power distributions such as those posed by radical fringe elements or other political actors.¹³⁷

While the structural school has primarily focused on conflict theory, recent social movement theory scholarship has deployed structural analysis to explain the frequency and behavior of social movements under autocratic and authoritarian regimes in the Middle East and North Africa. This analysis suggests that such states build coercive apparatus with extreme capacity and will to repress dissent.¹³⁸ Furthermore, such research has suggested that

¹³⁴ Jack A. Goldstone, "Understanding the Revolutions of 2011: Weakness and Resilience in Middle Eastern Autocracies" *Current*, Issue 533 (June 2011), 3-6.

¹³⁵ Misagh Parsa, *States, Ideologies, and Social Revolutions*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 25-26.

¹³⁶ Parsa, *States, Ideologies, and Social Revolutions*, 279-280.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 280-281.

¹³⁸ Eva Bellin, "Reconsidering the Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Lessons From the Arab Spring," *Comparative Politics* 44, no. 2 (January 2012), 139.

authoritarian regimes may exploit weak democratic structures to create structures of patronage that mute demands for change.¹³⁹

Rational Choice and Resource Mobilization Theories

The resource mobilization (RM) and rational choice (RC) approaches to revolutionary conflict and social movement theory emphasize the agency of individuals or collectives in taking strategic action within the context of contentious politics. As such, RM/RC theorists have emphasized the structuralist gap between revolutionary situations and revolutionary outcomes.¹⁴⁰ They argue that while structure may indeed bound political opportunity, the motives and dynamics of agent behavior are the critical variables of contention.¹⁴¹ RM/RC theorists have often employed a mix of case studies, game theory models, and quantitative analysis to support their arguments. Ted Gurr, Charles Tilly, and Stathis Kalyvas have each proposed variants of RM/RC theory. Critics of RM/RC theory often reference the economic “free rider” problem of collective action, the problem of preference falsification, and the failure of RM/RC arguments to account for socially constructed identity in their particular logics.¹⁴²

Ted Robert Gurr’s *Why Men Rebel* (1970), as the title implies, postulated a social-psychological theory of individual agency in revolution. Gurr argued that a population’s widespread perception of relative deprivation produced discontent, which when politicized,

¹³⁹ Ellen Lust, “Competitive Clientelism in the Middle East,” *Journal of Democracy* 20, no. 3 (July 2009), 122.

¹⁴⁰ Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution*, 193-194.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 211-216.

¹⁴² Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1965), 2. Olson describes the ‘free rider’ problem of accounting for the involvement of rational actors in collective action when they will benefit from a collective good regardless of participation. Timur Kuran, “Now Out of Never: The Element of Surprise in the East European Revolution of 1989,” *World Politics* 44, no. 1 (October 1991), 16-17. Kuran argues that preference falsification makes measuring relative deprivation impossible.

engendered political violence.¹⁴³ Gurr suggested that relative deprivation correlated to gaps between the perception of values and capability. The intensity of relative deprivation for a particular social group or collective reflected the average amount of anger felt by its members. In Gurr's words, "the potential for collective violence would be greatest in a nation most of whose citizens felt sharply deprived with respect to their most deeply valued goals, had individually and collectively exhausted the constructive means open to them to attain those goals, and lacked any non-violent opportunity to act on that anger."¹⁴⁴

In *From Mobilization to Revolution* (1978), Charles Tilly codified a concept of collective action, aimed at explaining the strategic behavior of groups, rather than individuals. Tilly used a polity model to outline the power dynamics between governments and non-governmental groups that he categorized as either members or challengers. The polity model further described a framework in which groups inside and outside a polity built coalitions to pool resources for claim making on the government.¹⁴⁵ From that point, Tilly proposed a mobilization model to explain the interaction of group interests, organization, mobilization of shared resources, and opportunity in the joint production of collective action.¹⁴⁶ In this model, group interests and organization translated into capability for collective action, while perceptions of opportunity or threat and degrees of repression or facilitation informed a group's will to mobilize resources and act on its power claims.¹⁴⁷ Tilly reasoned that group strategic action within this framework bridged the gap between revolutionary situations and revolutionary outcomes. Tilly was also one of the first conflict theorists to recognize continuity between revolutions and social movements, a

¹⁴³ Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 12-13.

¹⁴⁴ Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*, 92.

¹⁴⁵ Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution*, 52-54.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 54-89.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 98-99.

relationship he fully articulated in re-bounding both phenomena within the sphere of contentious politics. In addition to his role in developing the field of contentious politics, Tilly's numerous contributions to the study of mobilization and collective action in revolution and social movements include (but are not limited to) *The Contentious French* (1986), *European Revolutions, 1492-1992* (1993), *Popular Contention in Great Britain, 1758-1834* (1995), *The Politics of Collective Violence* (2003), and *Social Movements, 1768-2004* (2004).

In *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (2006), Stathis N. Kalyvas used a rational choice model based in empirical data that addressed individual action in the context of local dynamics and degree of government or insurgent control to explain the disproportionate violence of civil war. Kalyvas argued that political actors seeking information and control and noncombatants oriented on local dynamics seeking survival and opportunities jointly produced violence in civil war.¹⁴⁸ Kalyvas reasoned that that this interaction often resulted in increased violence during periods where a political actor (either insurgent movement or government) exerted weak control over a community.¹⁴⁹

Cultural Framing Theory

The third and most recently developed school of conflict and social movement theory is cultural framing. In contrast to scholarship that emphasizes macro-patterns of structure or strategic behavior by collective or individual entities, the cultural framing perspective seeks to particularize conflict and protest by examining social construction processes at a micro-level.¹⁵⁰ Cultural frame scholars point out that neither individual dissatisfaction nor the strategic

¹⁴⁸ Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 6.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 205. Kalyvas' model is graphically depicted in Figure 7.7.

¹⁵⁰ John A. Noakes and Hank Johnson, "Frames of Protest: A Roadmap to a Perspective," in *Frames of Protest: Social Movements and the Framing Perspective*, ed. Hank Johnson and John A. Noakes (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 1.

mobilization of resources by groups provides a full picture of how conditions and potential yield either revolutionary or social movement outcomes. They argue that revolutions and social movements require people to believe that collective action will deliver a desired goal commensurate with the risks that such activity entails. In essence, they maintain that identity-based and rational decision-making interact to mediate perceptions of opportunity and threat and inspire mobilization. This scholarship suggests that analyzing cultural frames or framing processes yields insight into how constructed and communicated narratives resonate with particular audiences and inspire (or fail to inspire) collective action.¹⁵¹ David A. Snow and William A. Gamson provide complementary perspectives on different aspects of cultural framing. Criticisms of cultural framing suggest that it is tantamount to ideology-based argumentation, and thus difficult to empirically measure and troublesome to generalize into theory.¹⁵²

David A. Snow advocated for a constructivist perspective of social movement theory that emphasized the role of subjective interpretation and meaning in causing and sustaining group mobilization. Snow and his collaborators highlighted the interaction between social movement entrepreneurs and their political constituents.¹⁵³ He argued that social movement entrepreneurs articulate and amplify frames that describe a problem, envision a solution, and encourage people to join social and resistance movements. These collective action frames, he reasoned, have increased resonance when they connect constituents with key cultural elements in a way that inspires action.¹⁵⁴ He reasoned that the collective action and master frames that result from

¹⁵¹ Noakes and Johnson, “Frames of Protest: A Roadmap to a Perspective,” 2.

¹⁵² Skocpol, *Social Revolutions in the Modern World*, 202-208. Skocpol allows that ideology helps explain particular cases, but argues that ideational explanation may be difficult to generalize into an explanatory framework. See also Pamela E. Oliver and Hank Johnson, “What a Good Idea! Ideologies and Frames in Social Movement Research,” in *Frames of Protest*, 185-186. Oliver and Johnson suggest that framing must distinguish itself from the older, more political concept of ideology.

¹⁵³ Noakes and Johnson, “Frames of Protest: A Roadmap to a Perspective,” 7.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 8-16.

interpretive processes are critical to understanding the course and character of social movements.¹⁵⁵

William A. Gamson reintroduced a social psychology perspective to the study of social movements by highlighting the process by which collective identity shapes personal identity, manifested primarily through the medium of culture.¹⁵⁶ In shorthand, Gameson's focus was on the micro-level question of how "I" becomes "we." He argued that the construction of collective identity, left broadly unaddressed within RM/RC models that stressed strategic and rational action, played a crucial role in mediating individual perceptions of risk and investment in collective goals. Collective action frames, he proposed, were built on how people negotiated meaning through perceptions of identity, agency, and injustice.

A Synthesis: The Theory of Contentious Politics

To this point, this literature assessment is suggestive of a modern trend in revolutionary conflict and social movement theories towards synthetic perspectives that account for political and economic structures, the rational/strategic action of individuals and collectives, and the influence of subjective factors such as ideology and culture.¹⁵⁷ Scholarly debates often center on which factors have primacy, rather than argue for exclusion. The synthetic framework of contentious politics, as proposed by Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly stands out

¹⁵⁵ David A. Snow, "Framing Processes, Ideology, and Discursive Fields," in *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, eds. David A. Snow, Sarah A. Soule, and Hanspeter Kreisi (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 404.

¹⁵⁶ William A. Gameson, "The Social Psychology of Collective Action," in *Frontiers of Social Movement Theory*, eds. Aldon Morris and Carol McClurg Mueller (New Haven: CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 56-61.

¹⁵⁷ Examples include Parsa, *States, Ideologies and Social Revolutions*; Romano, *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement*; Joel Beinin and Frederic Vairel, *Social Movements, Mobilization, and Contestation in the Middle East and North Africa* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press 2011); and Charles Tripp, *The Power and the People: Paths of Resistance in the Middle East* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

as a sophisticated model for understanding the dynamic interaction between the factors alternately emphasized by the predominant scholarly perspectives.

As conceived of by McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, contentious politics is defined as consisting of public, collective claim-making by collective actors on other collectives or on major political actors, when a government is a claimant, an object of claims, or a third party to claims.¹⁵⁸ The theory of contentious politics accepts the classic variables of structure, mobilization, and framing, but seeks to examine the way these factors interact and to identify similar cause-effect relationships that occur across a broad spectrum of contention. Contentious politics perceives continuity between forms of violent and nonviolent contention as divergent as the French Revolution and the American civil rights movement.¹⁵⁹

To identify generalizable cause-effect relationships, contentious politics examines mechanisms, or events that produce the same immediate effects over a broad range of circumstances.¹⁶⁰ Combinations and sequences of mechanisms comprise processes that produce specified outcomes.¹⁶¹ Mechanisms and processes are located within episodes, bounded sequences of contentious interaction that can range from a series of protests or strikes to broad cycles of contention such as the Arab Spring.¹⁶² McAdam, Tilly, and Tarrow outline five mechanisms that illustrate reoccurring causal relationships:

- Brokerage – the production of a new connection between previously unconnected or weakly connected sites of contention

¹⁵⁸ Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow and Charles Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 5.

¹⁵⁹ McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, “Comparative Perspectives on Contentious Politics,” 277-290. See also McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention*, 28-32.

¹⁶⁰ Tilly and Tarrow, *Contentious Politics*, 29.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid., 36-38.

- Identity shift and boundary formation – the formation of collective identity by previously unconnected individuals with previously disparate social identities
- Co-optation – the incorporation of a previously excluded political actor into some center of political power
- Diffusion – the spread of a contentious performance, issue, or interpretive frame from one site to another
- Repression/facilitation – action by an authority that increases or decreases the actual or potential cost of claim-making¹⁶³

Contentious politics seeks to contextualize forms of contention within political opportunity structures or features of regimes (regular relations among governments, established political actors, outside political actors, and challengers) and institutions that facilitate or repress opportunities, repertoires, and performances of contention and affect their likely outcomes.¹⁶⁴ The theory suggests that levels of political freedom and governing capacity within a regime broadly correlate to the likelihood and manifestations of contention (such as a social movement or an armed insurgency).¹⁶⁵

The theory also addresses contentious interaction principally through the mobilization and demobilization of collective actors and action. The process of mobilization is characterized by sequences of mechanisms such as identity shift, brokerage, the social appropriation of claim-making sites, and the diffusion of contentious repertoires that influence perceptions of opportunity for claim-making. Demobilization, on the other hand, is characterized by sequences that feature mechanisms of co-optation, defection, and increased repression.

¹⁶³ McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, “Comparative Perspectives on Contentious Politics,” 274-275.

¹⁶⁴ Tilly and Tarrow, *Contentious Politics*, 45.

¹⁶⁵ McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention*, 72-88.

Summary of Literature Assessment

This literature assessment has attempted to outline many detailed and divergent scholarly contributions to the study of revolutionary conflicts and social movements and has not done justice to the full body of work of any one theorist. It has also excluded some seminal work on contention in the interest of sketching a general narrative reflecting the major academic approaches to conflict and social movement theory. The systems outlook of Chalmers Johnson, the anthropological perspective of James C. Scott, and the “social non-movements” model of Asef Bayat are all examples of excellent scholarship that deserve the attention of any reader interested in developing a deeper appreciation of the field.¹⁶⁶

Despite such reduction and exclusion, this literature assessment is suggestive that the theory of contentious politics may be exceptionally useful as a framework for describing and explaining the phenomenon of insurgency. Given Huntington’s definition of revolutionary war as “a struggle between a nongovernmental group and a government in which the latter attempts to destroy the former by some or all means at its command, and the nongovernmental group attempts by all the means at its command to replace the government in some or all of its territory,” it is clear that insurgency falls squarely within the realm of contentious politics as defined by McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly.¹⁶⁷ As an approach that accounts for the dynamic interaction between structures, individual and collective behaviors, and interpretive framing, the theory of contentious politics leverages an enormous body of scholarship spanning the past fifty years. Furthermore, the theory identifies causal relationships to describe the contexts and mechanisms that influence the mobilization and demobilization of collective action to provide practical insights into how and why contentious episodes result in particular outcomes. For the

¹⁶⁶ For further reading see Chalmers Johnson, *Revolutionary Change* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1966); James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985); Asef Bayat, *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*, 2nd ed. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013).

¹⁶⁷ Huntington, “Introduction: Guerilla Warfare in Theory and Policy,” xvi.

special warfare operational artist, the framework of contentious politics provides a sufficiently granular perspective that may help guide the application of a limited but well-trained and educated force as it attempts to influence the mobilization or demobilization of collective actors in the context of insurgency.

Conclusion

This monograph concludes that there is strong evidence that from 1952-1965, the US Army Special Forces appropriated two distinct theories of special warfare, one of guerilla warfare and one of insurgency. Special Forces' institutional theory of insurgency, an adaptation of Mao Zedong's theory of people's war, remains a primary institutional framework for applications of special warfare operational art when concerned with insurgency. Furthermore, this monograph suggests that a synthetic academic theory of contentious politics provides a more sophisticated theory of insurgency for future special warfare operational art.

The pervasiveness of the people war's model within the US military has made commonplace the analogy of population in insurgency to terrain in maneuver warfare. Like any analogical reasoning, this is an obvious reduction meant to convey the importance that the prevalent theory places on winning hearts and minds to mobilize a critical mass of popular support for either a government or insurgent group. While this monograph does not seek to challenge the importance of popular support, particularly in the context of guerilla warfare, it does question the utility of a theoretical approach that treats a population or popular will as a biddable, ubiquitous, and cohesive whole. Such an approach does not adequately address what Emile Simpson refers to as the "politically kaleidoscopic battlespace" that characterizes the contemporary experience of counterinsurgency.¹⁶⁸ Indeed, the parallel that Simpson suggests between counterinsurgency and domestic politics in liberal democracies further highlights the theoretical poverty of the model of people's war.¹⁶⁹ No American politician would attempt to win an election by simply trying to win the hearts and minds of 51 percent of voters. Instead, that politician would seek to strategically identify and influence key actors and groups with the capacity to mobilize their constituents to render support at the polls. When insurgency is

¹⁶⁸ Emile Simpson, *War from the Ground Up: Twenty First Century Combat as Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 5.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

understood as armed contentious politics, such a comparison can be appreciated as more than pure allegory. To extend the geographic analogy a step further and identify key “human terrain” within a population requires a theoretical framework that appreciates how and why people join in or support collective claim-making and mobilize or demobilize to redistribute political power. Special warfare operational artists do not have the luxury to approach insurgency or counterinsurgency as a purely military problem that can be addressed with military mass or firepower, as Charles Wolf suggested when describing the limits of an output-oriented approach.¹⁷⁰ Just as the special operations theory of relative superiority describes a means by which special operations forces can apply numerically inferior forces to succeed in conducting surgical strikes, a theory of special warfare must explain how limited means can be employed in insurgency to achieve desired political conditions.¹⁷¹ This monograph suggests that a theory of contentious politics may provide sufficient granularity to do precisely that.

Operationalizing Academic Theory

With notable exceptions, military institutions have historically had some difficulty accepting theoretical contributions from nonmilitary sources. The foremost example of such interaction is the general reluctance of the British admiralty to accept Sir Julian Corbett’s theory of naval warfare in the early 20th century. In time, Corbett’s theory nonetheless proved superior to the Mahanian construct preferred by the institution of the day. Such inclination might suggest that operationalizing a theory of contentious politics as a grammar of insurgency for special warfare operational art could be a difficult proposition. There are, however, some positive indicators that such an effort may be achievable and even already partially underway.

¹⁷⁰ Wolf, “Insurgency and Counterinsurgency: New Myths and Old Realities,” 11-12.

¹⁷¹ William H. McRaven, *Spec Ops: Case Studies in Special Operations Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1995), 381-391.

US Army special warfare institutions have recently demonstrated a high willingness to elicit scholarly perspectives, as exhibited by the collaboration between the US Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) and the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory.¹⁷² Indeed, a contemporary update of the SORO 1966 *Human Factors Considerations of Undergrounds in Insurgencies* cites a number of the conflict and social movement theorists mentioned in this monograph inclusive of Theda Skocpol, Jack Goldstone, Ted Gurr, and David Snow.¹⁷³ In 2013, the USASOC quarterly publication *Special Warfare* published an article by Doowan Lee that advocated a social movement approach as a way to enhance the operational flexibility and strategic utility of unconventional warfare.¹⁷⁴ Some perspectives of revolutionary conflict theory have also penetrated recent joint doctrine, as evident in the new Joint Publication 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, which cites Kalyvas and Skocpol alongside more traditional sources like Mao, Galula, and Trinquier.¹⁷⁵

Further Study and Research

In attempting to confirm or deny its hypothesis, this monograph has perhaps raised more questions than it has answered and left many avenues open for future study and research. A richer and more pervasive analysis of the evolution of special warfare institutions, doctrine, and theory would be of great value to today's special warfare practitioners. The Special Forces theory of guerilla warfare, remarkably consistent since Russell Volkmann first codified it, deserves more attention than this work has provided. A general tendency in American military literature and

¹⁷² Paul J. Tompkins Jr. and Nathan Bos, eds., *Human Factors Considerations of Undergrounds in Insurgencies*, 2nd ed. (Fort Bragg, NC: United States Army Special Operations Command, 2013), iii-vi.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 28-30, 272.

¹⁷⁴ Doowan Lee, "A Social Movement Approach to Unconventional Warfare," *Special Warfare* 26, no. 3 (July-September 2013), 27-32.

¹⁷⁵ Joint Publication (JP) 3-24, *Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2013), E-3 – E-6.

doctrine to conflate guerilla warfare and insurgency is likely deserving of its own examination. Given the apparent lack of theoretical development between the first and second eras of counterinsurgency, how can Special Forces, the Army, and the joint force capture the lessons of Iraq and Afghanistan before they are forgotten or lost? Mao Zedong's theory of insurgency has been suggested to be far subtler and more detailed than its American manifestation would imply, and future research might benefit from its comparison to the theory of contentious politics. Perhaps Mao's understanding of class structure, mobilization of the Chinese peasantry, and his meticulous efforts to frame a revolutionary message can be better apprehended through such a lens. Case studies that use contentious politics to describe and explain episodes of insurgency are essential to its full evaluation as a grammar of revolutionary war. Finally, a translation of basic concepts from contentious politics into useful outlines and heuristics are likely to be of value for special warfare operational artists who seek to leverage its perspectives to achieve strategic outcomes through the arrangement of special warfare operations in time, space, and purpose.

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